

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO ALL AFRICAN DIPLOMATIC POSTS

AMCONSUL LUANDA

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

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CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION USIA, SECSTATE, INFO JOHANNESBURG,
DURBAN, CAPETOWN, APRIL 2, FROM PRETORIA RPTD TO YOU:

QUOTE UNCLAS PRETORIA 1114

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

USIAC

E.O. 11652: N/A

SUBJ: MELVIN LAIRD'S PRESS CONFERENCE JOHANNESBURG

MELVIN LAIRD, FORMER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, INDICATED IN A PRESS
CONFERENCE AT JOHANNESBURG UPON HIS ARRIVAL IN SOUTH AFRICA LAST
NIGHT THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD REVIEW ITS EMBARGO ON ARMS FOR
SOUTH AFRICA BECAUSE OF SOUTH AFRICA'S DETENTE POLICY. UNDER
A NINE COLUMN BANNER HEADLINE " ARMS BAN MAY GO" AND ATWOROTU
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SUBHEAD " U.S. MOVES TO REWARD 'DETENTE'" TODAY'S RAND DAILY

MAIL FRONT-PAGED MR. LAIRD'S PRESS CONFERENCE. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF THAT REPORT:

" BECAUSE OF SOUTH AFRICA'S DETENTE POLICY THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT WOULD REVIEW ITS EMBARGO ON ARMS FOR THE COUNTRY, THE FORMER DEFENSE SECRETARY, MR. MELVIN LAIRD, SAID LAST NIGHT. " SOUTH AFRICA'S MOVE TOWARDS DETENTE WITH AFRICAN STATES HAD OPENED UP BETTER UNDERSTANDING AND COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND SOUTH AFRICA MR. LAIRD TOLD A PRESS CONFERENCE IN JOHANNESBURG.

" ' WE ARE WATCHING YOUR FORWARD POLICIES WITH A GREAT DEAL OF INTEREST.

"" I UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CAPE SEA ROUTE FROM AN INTERNATIONAL SECURITY STANDPOINT" SAID MR. LAIRD.

" BUT HE WOULD NOT COMMENT ON WHAT AMERICA'S ATTITUDE WOULD BE TO SOUTH AFRICA IF RUSSIA AND CHINA MOVED FROM VIETNAM TO CONCENTRATE THEIR ACTIVITIES ON MOZAMBIQUE.

" AT ITS PRESENT RATE OF MILITARY EXPANSION, THE SOVIET UNION WOULD BE MUCH STRONGER THAN THE UNITED STATES IN FIVE TO SEVEN YEARS.

" ' THAT SHOULD BE OF CONCERN TO ALL NATIONS OF THE WESTERN WORLD. I AM VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE SOVIET NAVAL BUILD-UP AND THE WORLD WIDE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY.'

" MR LAIRD IS ON A PRIVATE VISIT TO SOUTH AFRICA IN HIS CAPACITY AS SENIOR ADVISER ON NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS TO AN INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE. HE ARRIVED YESTERDAY MORNING AND WILL LEAVE FOR THE FAR EST NEXT WEEK.

" COMMENTING ON THE LARGE AMOUNT OF ITS GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT THAT RUSSIA SPENT ON DEFENSE, MR. LAIRD SAID THAT 80 0/0 WENT ON EQUIPMENT AND THE REST ON LABOUR.

" SIXTY-THREE PER CENT OF THE US DEFENSE BUDGET WENT TO PERSONNEL AND THE REST TOWARDS SHIPS, MODERNISATION AND EQUIPMENT.

" AMERICA'S AID IN VIETNAM DID NOT COMPARE WITH THAT OF RUSSIA AND CHINA, WHICH HAD GONE IN ' AT A TREMENDOUS RATE'.

" MILITARY EQUIPMENT IN THE UNITED STATES COST ABOUT FOUR TIMES AS MUCH AS IN RUSSIA AND CHINA, BECAUSE OF THE HIGH LABOUR RATES.

" MR. LAIRD FORECAST THAT THE WAR IN VIETNAM WOULD DRAG ON IN UNCLASSIFIED

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PARTS OF THE COUNTRY.

" ' I HAVE NOT SEEN ANY MOVEMENT TOWARDS DETENTE BETWEEN THE SOVIET UNION AND THE U.S. AS A PRACTICAL MEASURE,' HE SAID.

" LIKE AMERICA, SOUTH AFRICA HAD TO FACE THE TREMENDOUS PROBLEM OF ENERGY COSTS. ALL THE FREE GOVERNMENTS OF THE WORLD, ESPECIALLY IN EUROPE, WERE GOING TO HAVE TO APPLY A GREAT DEAL OF DISCIPLINE TO THEIR ECONOMIES AND TO THEIR USE OF ENERGY." END TEXT.

SABC'S DOMESTIC SERVICE GAVE PROMINENT ATTENTION IN ITS MORNING DOMESTIC BROADCAST TO MR. LAIRDS REPORTED COMMENTS. POST PRESUMES THAT IT HAS GIVEN EQUAL ATTENTION, AT LEAST, TO THESE COMMENTS IN ITS OVERSEAS BROADCASTS. POST ALSO ASSUMES INTERNATIONAL WIRE SERVICES HAVE COVERED THE PRESS CONFERENCE EXTENSIVELY AND REPORTED THEM BACK TO AFRICA. IN RESPONSE TO PRESS INQUIRIES YESTERDAY POST ADVISED THAT MR. LAIRD WAS A PRIVATE INDIVIDUAL ON A PRIVATE VISIT AND USIS WAS NOT FAMILIAR WITH DETAILS OF HIS PROGRAM HERE. SHOULD IT RECEIVE FURTHER INQUIRIES TODAY IN WAKE OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE USIS INTENDS TO RESPOND IN SIMILAR FASHION ABOUT MR. LAIRD'S VISIT. REGARDING QUESTIONS CONCERNING USG POLICY TOWARDS SOUTH AFRICA USIS INTENDS RESPONDING THAT POLICY TOWARD SOUTHERN AFRICA AS WELL AS TOWARD NUMEROUS OTHER AREAS OF THE WORLD IS UNDER CONTINUING REVIEW BY THE DEPARTMENT BUT WE HAVE NO REASON TO EXPECT ANY CHANGE IN CURRENT POLICY IS CONTEMPLATED. DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO CONSIDER MAKING AN AUTHORITATIVE STATEMENT TO THIS EFFECT FOR USE BY THIS POST AND OTHER POSTS IN AFRICA AND ELSEWHERE TO KNOCK DOWN POSSIBLE MISCONCEPTIONS THAT MAY GROW OUT OF MR. LAIRD'S REPORTED PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENTS. ADVISE. PETERSON UNQUOTE. KISSINGER

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